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AUTHOR Manno, Bruno V.
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ABSTRACT

During the past 15 years of collecting school data, the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) has received a 100 percent response rate from member schools, according to this overview of enrollment trends and statistics reporting in Catholic schools. The data are compiled into a yearly directory, "Catholic Schools in America," that, in addition to individual school information, displays (1) Catholic school statistics alphabetically by state; (2) archdioceses/dioceses ranked by number of students; (3) states ranked by number of students; (4) number of schools, students, and lay and religious full-time teaching staff; and (5) a complete list of Catholic school superintendents. An introduction to the directory analyzes this data and financial data on the schools as well. Turning to enrollment trends, this overview notes that in every year from 1976 to 1980 Catholic schools have enrolled 6.7 percent of the total number of public and nonpublic school children in the U.S. Enrollment trends in Catholic schools show an increase in minority and non-Catholic students and, regionally, an increase in the Southwest and West. Projections by the National Center for Education Statistics show enrollment in nonpublic schools will increase from 11 percent in 1982 to 12 percent in 1989. The Catholic percentage of the total public/nonpublic market has been stable and, from an enrollment perspective, Catholic schools are holding their own. (Author/MLF)

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PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS:

THE CATHOLIC SECTOR

Bruno V. Manno

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March 19-23, 1982, New York, N.Y.

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PRIVATE SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS: THE CATHOLIC SECTOR

Bruno V. Manno, NCEA

I was asked to do two things in discussing the general enrollment situation as it relates to Catholic elementary and secondary schools:

1.) discuss the NCEA data collection procedure;

2.) overview general enrollment trends

NCEA's Data Collection Procedure

A. Preliminary Comment: Let me begin with a point that often goes without mentioning but needs to be kept in mind in discussions concerning NCEA's efforts at collecting data on member schools: there is no way in which NCEA can force, let alone mandate, this collection of data. All we can do is encourage, cajole, seduce, and bribe them to cooperate (and by bribe I mean, we promise to give each of our dioceses a free copy of the final reports). Thus far, we've been very good at the process. In over ten years of collecting data, we've never had less than a 100 percent responce rate from our diocesan school offices.

B. Standard School Survey Form (hand out SSSF): NCEA supplies a SSSF to those diocese who request it for their own data collection purposes. This form was developed several years ago by the NCEA Data Bank Office working cooperatively with individual dioceses. To be clear about this SSSF: not all dioceses use this form and of those who do, not all collect from their school every bit of information requested on the questionnair.

C. The Procedure: Let me speak about hypothetical year I and II. From late March to early May, year I, we do an informal survey of various people and groups trying to determine what data we will request from the dioceses in September. After this is determined, it is communicated to diocesan offices. This occurs no later than late May. In September, Market Data Retrieval of Westport, CT -- our partners in crime -- mail from their office to each diocesan contact two things:

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1.) A computer printout of each school, K-8, 9-12, (not including special education schools, pre-K, or just K) in the diocese listing:

a. School name, address, phone
b. School enrollment
c. School principal
d. various building information

2.) A diocesan summary form requesting from the diocese the data we determined in May would be collected in September. (pass out copy of this year's form)

All of this is due in our office by October 31. Needless to say, this never occurs.

Each computer printout is checked in our office and then forwarede to Market Data Retrival. They compile this information into a directory published in April of every year by Fisher Publishing Co. of Englewood, CO under the title Catholic School in America. (Pass out order form).

In addition to individual school information this directory contains 4 charts and 1 list:

1. Chart A: Catholic School Statistics Alphabetically by State
2. Chart B: Archdioceses/Dioceses Ranked by number of students
3. Chart C: States Ranked by Number of Students
4. Chart D: Number of Schools, Number of students, Lay and Religious Full-time Teaching Staff (all on both elementary and secondary levels)
5. A complete list of archdiocesan/diocesan Catholic school superintendents

All of this information is analysed in an introduction.

In addition to analyzing the school enrollment and staffing data, NCEA analyses financial data on elementary and secondary schools. In previous years, two seperate reports were published for each sector. This year a new format has been devised whereby elementary and secondary school, staffing, enrolment, and financial data is published in one 60 page volume (pass out brochure and show volume)

So much for the data collection procedure.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

I would like to consider 6 items here. The first is a general one on the nonpublic school situation. The remaining 5 overview enrollment trends in Catholic elementary and secondary schools.

I. NCES projections show enrollment in nonpublic schools (K-12) will increase from 11.33% in 1982 to 12.33% in 1989. This increase occurs within a gradually decreasing then slightly increasing total number of students. (cf NCES. CONDITION OF EDUCATION: 1980 Edition, p. 56)

II. In every year from 1976 to 1980, Catholic schools enrolled 6.7% of the total number of public and nonpublic school children in the US. In 1975, the total was slightly higher at 7%. This school year, 1981, the percentage shows a slight increase from the steady 6.7% to 6.8%. The conclusion is clear: looking at these schools across the US, the Catholic percentage of the total public/nonpublic market has been stable and from an enrollment perspective, these schools are holding their own.

III. Today, the Catholic sector comprises the largest segment of the private school universe--slightly over 61%. This is smaller than the highpoint of 1965 when it totaled 87%. Over the ten year period from 1965 to 1975, the total decline was from this high of 87% to 69%, an average loss of 1.8% per year.

Since 1975, this reduction continued but at a far slower average percentage. The Catholic share of the nonpublic school enrollment went from 69% in 1975 to 61% in 1981, an average of slightly over 1.3%, a drop of .5% from the previous 10 years.

IV. In 1981, Catholic school enrollment declined 12,000 pupils or .4% from the previous year. This breaks down to 3,000 elementary students (.1%) and 9,000 (1.1%) secondary studnets. The 3,000 decline on the elementary level is the smallest since the 1960's. The total enrollment decline is the smallest since the 1960's.

The small elementary decline is remarkable, considering the fewer number of school-age children. It may reflect the movement into the Catholic elementary school of those attending pre-K schools which were opened by or in cooperation with Catholic parishes. In any event, this situation bears watching.

V. Regional enrollment trends continue to be apparent. The Southeast and West/Farwest show steady increases in enrollment from 1968 to the present. The growth is not as rapid as it was during the earlier years, but it continues to occur.

In 1968-69, the Southeast enrolled 8.3% of the total number of children attending Catholic schools. The West/Farwest had 12.6% for a combined total of 20.9%. In 1981 the figures are 11.1% for the Southeast and 15.1% for the West/Farwest for a total of 26.2%. These are not just percentage increases based upon stable numerical enrollments within a smaller total number of students. They are actual numerical increases. Of the 8 new elementary and 1 secondary school opened in 1981, all but one are in these two regions.

VI. Minority and non-Catholic enrollments continue to increase.

Since 1970, general minority enrollment rose from 10.9% to 18.6%. On a more specific level, black enrollment went from 4.8% to 8.1%; Hispanic from 5% to 8.4%; Asian from .5% to 1.8%. The only decrease in minority enrollment occured among American Indians where it dropped from .5% to .3%.

There is no 1981 data on non-Catholic enrollment. The 1980 data shows an increase of 4% in the number of non-Catholics attending Catholic schools. In 1970 this number was 5% and in 1980 it was 9%.

Bruno V. Manno, Ph.D.
The National Catholic
Educational Association
1077 Thirtieth St., N.W. Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20007